Best Practices

- The unit always follows the amount; for example, “5 g” not “g 5”
- No period is used after the unit abbreviation, because it may be mistaken for the number 1 if written poorly; for example, write “20 mg” instead of “20 mg.”
- Do not add an “s” to make the unit plural, because it may be misread for another unit; for example, “5 mL” and not “5 mls”
- Separate the amount from the unit so that the number and unit of measure do not run together, because the unit can be mistaken as a zero or zeros, risking a 10-fold to 100-fold overdose; for example “20 mg” not “20mg”
- Place a space for amounts with more than 4 digits; for example, 1000 units but 10 000 units not “10,000 units” and not “10000 units”
- Decimals are used to designate fractional amounts; for example “1.5 mL” not “1½ mL”
- Use a leading zero to emphasize the decimal point for fractional amounts less than 1; without the zero, the amount may be interpreted as a whole number, resulting in a serious overdose; for example “0.5 mg” not “.5 mg”
- Omit unnecessary or trailing zeros that can be misread as part of the amount if the decimal point is not seen; for example “1.5 mg” not “1.50 mg”
- Do not use the abbreviation “µg” for microgram, because it might be mistaken for mg which is 1000 times the intended amount; for example “150 mcg” not “150 µg”
- Do not use the abbreviation “cc” for mL, because the unit can be mistaken for zeros; for example use “500 mL” not “500 cc”
- Always use the capitalized “L” to indicate litre. The lower case “l” is easily confused with the number one (1).

Source: Pickard et al. Dosage Calculations.